

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1452

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, PBOR, MA, US

SUBJECT: U.S. -MALAGASY RELATIONS

NAIROBI FOR REDSO

REF: A. STATE 68529 (NOTAL); B. TANANARIVE 957 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: MALAGASY FOREIGN MINISTER HAS, BY JUST ANNOUNCED DECISION TO REFRAIN FROM GENERAL DEBATE SPEECH AT UNGA AND OTHER INDICATIONS, GIVEN WHAT WE INTERPRET AS CLEAR SIGNAL OF ACCEPTANCE OF EMBASSY ADVICE THAT U.S. WILL BE BETTER DISPOSED CONSIDER FURTHER AID TO MADAGASCAR IF MALAGASY REPRESENTATIVES ADOPT LESS HOSTILE AND MORE BALANCED ATTITUDE TOWARD U.S. THAN IF THEY PURSUE STRIDENT, RADICAL ANTI-U.S. LINE. EMBASSY THEREFORE INTENDS SHORTLY (PURSUANT AUTHORITY GIVEN BY DEPARTMENT) INFORM CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF FOREIGN MINISTER THAT WE ARE READY INITIATE DISCUSSION OF NEW AID PROJECT, THOUGH WITHOUT SPECIFIC COMMITMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER RATSIRAKA HAS GIVEN FASCINATING AND SIGNIFICANT "NON-INTERVIEW" TO MADAGASCAR'S LEADING DAILY MADAGASCAR MATIN, WHICH WE INTERPRET AS CLEAR AND CAREFULLY DESIGNED SIGNAL TO EMBASSY OF CHANGE WE HAVE SOUGHT IN HIS
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HARSH AND UNFRIENDLY ATTITUDE AND TACTICS TOWARD U.S.

2. MADAGASCAR MATIN ARTICLE OF SEPT 19 STARTS OUT BY STATING CORRESPONDENT HAD WEEK AGO REQUESTED INTERVIEW WITH RATSIRAKA IN ORDER TO ASSESS RESULTS OF MALAGASY DIPLOMACY OF PAST TWO YEARS, PARTICULARLY IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE OF NEW MALAGASY POLICY OF "OPENING OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS" (INCLUDING ESTABLISHMENT RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES). CORRESPONDENT ADDED HE HAD ALSO EXPECTED OBTAIN STATEMENT ON MILITARY COMPETITION OF TWO SUPERPOWERS IN INDIAN OCEAN.

3. RATSIRAKA HOWEVER GREETED INTERVIEWER BY DECLARING THAT HE "IS TAKING A CURE OF SILENCE."

4. WHILE THUS REFUSING INTERVIEW, HE PROCEEDED MAKE WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: "I SHALL NOT MAKE SPEECH AT TWENTY-NINTH UNGA SESSION." HE ADDED IT IS NECESSARY INFORM UN AUTHORITIES MONTH AND HALF IN ADVANCE IF SPEECH IS PLANNED, BUT HE HAD NOT DONE SO BECAUSE HE HAS NOTHING TO SAY, UNLESS THERE IS UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT. HE WENT ON TO SAY HE WOULD BE IN NEW YORK TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO DELEGATION "DIFFICULT TRANSMIT BY TELEPHONE" AS PARTICULAR ISSUES ARISE.

5. THIS ELABORATELY STAGED "NON-INTERVIEW" SEEMS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO GET ACROSS TO EMBASSY THAT RATSIRAKA HAS NOW ALTERED HIS TACTIC OF SEIZING OCCASIONS FOR BELABORING U.S. IT IS MOST INTERESTING THAT SIGNAL IS GIVEN INDIRECTLY IN THIS MANNER, RATHER THAN DIRECTLY VIA FOREIGN OFFICE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH EMBASSY INITIALLY RAISED MATTER. FACE-SAVING IS IMPORTANT IN THIS COUNTRY WITH ITS SUBSTANTIAL SOUTHEAST ASIAN HERITAGE*

6. THUS, EVIDENCE HAS ACCUMULATED OF RATSIRAKA'S HEEDING OF EMBASSY ADVICE PASSED IN EARLY JULY VIA HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATE, DIRECTOR OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, THAT U.S. WILL BE BETTER DISPOSED CONSIDER FURTHER AID TO MADAGASCAR IF MALAGASY REPRESENTATIVES ADOPT LESS HOSTILE AND MORE BALANCED POSITION TOWARD U.S. THAN BY PURSUIT OF RATSIRAKA'S PURPORTED TACTICS OF SCARING U.S. INTO MORE AID BY STRIDENT AND RADICAL ANTI-U.S. STANCE (REF B):

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A. WHILE EMBASSY HAS NOT RECEIVED FULL INFORMATION ON LOS CONFERENCE IN CARACAS, RATSIRAKA EVIDENTLY REFRAINED FROM DELIVERY OF TOUGH ANTI-U.S. SPEECH WHICH HE HAD PREPARED PRIOR TO EMBASSY'S SIGNAL TO HIM IN EARLY JULY.

B. IF RATSIRAKA WERE CONTINUING FOLLOW HOSTILE ANTI-U.S. LINE HE WAS PURSUING EARLIER (E.G. BY SPONSORSHIP OF ONE-

SIDED ANTI-DIEGO GARCIA RESOLUTION AT OAU MEETING IN APRIL), HE WOULD HAVE SEIZED OCCASION OF CURRENT INTERVIEW TO BLAST U.S. ACTIONS IN INDIAN OCEAN, PARTICULARLY SINCE DIEGO GARCIA HAS RECENTLY BEEN IN NEWS HERE ON BASIS OF CONGRESSIONAL ACTION. SUCH ATTACK COULD ALSO HAVE PLEASED SOVIET ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AND MALAGASY AFFAIRS NOW IN MADAGASCAR ON VISIT.

C. DECISION REFRAIN FROM UNGA SPEECH IS OF COURSE CLEARER SIGNAL OF ALL OF CHANGE IN RATSIRAKA'S TACTICS VIS-A-VIS U.S. IT STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO HIS EXTREMELY HARSH ATTACKS ON U.S. AT BOTH REGULAR UNGA SESSION IN FALL 1973 AND SPECIAL SESSION APRIL 1974. EXTENT OF THIS CHANGE IN RATSIRAKA ALSO SIGNIFIED BY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP HE HAS HAD WITH ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT AND STRONG TEMPTATION HE MUST HAVE FELT TO FURTHER ALIGN HIMSELF WITH PRESENT UNGA PRESIDENT BOUTEFLIKA BY ENGAGING IN RENEWED ATTACK ON U.S. "IMPERIALISTS."

D. RATSIRAKA'S REFERENCE TO NEED FOR HIM TO BE ON SPOT IN NEW YORK TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO MALAGASY DELEGATION "DIFFICULT TO TRANSMIT BY TELEPHONE" MAY BE INVITATION TO U.S. TO MAKE APPROACH TO HIM ON ISSUE OF IMPORTANCE, SUCH AS ABSTENTION OR ABSENCE ON KHMER CREDENTIALS QUESTION (ON WHICH WE AWAITING DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS), PARTICULARLY IN VIEW COMMENT BY DIRECTOR BILATERAL RELATIONS THAT PERHAPS U.S. COULD INTERPRET ABSTENTION ON SOME IMPORTANT ISSUE AS KIND OF GESTURE WE SEEKING (REF B).

7. BALL ON U.S.-MALAGASY RELATIONS HAS NOW BEEN THROWN BACK INTO OUR COURT BY RATSIRAKA. THEREFORE, WE PLAN SHORTLY TELL DIRECTOR BILATERAL RELATIONS THAT WE ARE READY TO INITIATE DISCUSSION OF NEW AID PROJECT, THOUGH WITHOUT SPECIFIC CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMITMENT (PURSUANT AUTHORITY GIVEN IN REF A). IF, AS WE NOW ANTICIPATE, NASA STATION EXTENSION AGREEMENT IS CONCLUDED WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS WITH GOMR, WE MAY WAIT UNTIL IT IS OUT OF WAY BEFORE FOLLOWING UP WITH DIRECTOR BILATERAL RELATIONS.

8. GIVEN PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED BY FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT, WE SHALL TELL DIRECTOR BILATERAL RELATIONS WE WOULD PREFER DISCUSS AGRICULTURAL PROJECT. WE WOULD ALSO PREFER PROJECT WHICH COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN CONJUNCTION WITH WORLD BANK-IDA BECAUSE THEY POSSESS FRENCH-SPEAKING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE WHICH WE LACK FOR MAKING TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS AND INPUT INTO SUCH PROJECT. (THIS LINE OF PROJECT THINKING DISCUSSED WITH, AND AGREED TO, RECENTLY BY REDSO.) MENDENHALL

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